

RECREATION FOR THE BLIND  
by  
Antoinette C. Septinelli

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# RECREATION for the BLIND

*What it means and why it means so much in the lives of the sightless.*

By ANTOINETTE C. SEPTINELLI

Published for the information of the sighted public by BRAILLE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

Frank M. Dexter, Blind Leather Handicraft Worker. Mrs. B. A. Zeller, Handicraft Supervisor, holding a template used to tool a billfold.





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# **BRaille INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, Inc.**

**741 North Vermont Ave., Los Angeles 27, California**

*Founded 1919 — Incorporated 1929*

A non-profit, nation-wide, non-sectarian  
institution, devoted to the social and  
economic welfare of the physically blind.

Chartered under the laws of California on the 100th anniversary  
of the Braille system, in memory of its founder, Louis Braille.

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# FOREWORD

“RECREATION”, as a word applied to activities for the blind, is a word too often *misunderstood*—and also, *misused*. The misunderstanding arises from the average person’s concept of its meaning. The misuse of the term is in its application solely to physical exercise and athletics.

The Braille Institute’s system of recreation for the blind does not ignore the need of many of the sightless for physical exercise and active games; but it places the most emphasis upon the program that is described in the following article. For it is the 80 per cent of the blind who are 50 years of age, or older, who must receive first consideration. However, in fairness to the needs and desires of the younger blind, the Braille Institute has provided, in the plans for its new building, a commodious and specially-equipped gymnasium and also, two bowling lanes.

The Recreation department of the Braille Institute was inaugurated by the engagement of Mrs. Antoinette C. Septinelli as director, to make a thorough survey of the needs and possibilities for such a project. Mrs. Septinelli had been recreational director of the New York Association for the Blind at its headquarters, “The Lighthouse”, for nine years, working under Alma I. Guy who, though totally blind, had pioneered that activity. Mrs. Septinelli also had acquired practical experience in working with the blind, through co-operating as a volunteer with her husband, Anthony E. Septinelli, who is totally blind and is Supervisor of Services for the Blind, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, California State Department of Education.

Mrs. Septinelli’s survey lasted several months, during which time she visited many large churches and public buildings; interviewed individuals in schools, colleges, businesses, professions, civic and service groups, in order to secure space where recreation could be presented. She also obtained the services of volunteer workers and volunteer drivers.

Thus, the Braille Institute’s recreational activities are now in their second season (1946-47); meeting three times a week in as many (outside) locations and bringing to those combined meetings an average per week of 440 blind persons, with the co-operation of 85 volunteer assistants and 76 drivers.

But—there are nearly 800 blind persons on a waiting list (as this is written) who cannot be accommodated until permanent and adequate headquarters can be provided for them in the projected new building.

The rest of the story can best be told by Mrs. Septinelli.





*A group of blind friends arriving to participate in Recreational Activities. Also shown is the American Women's Voluntary Services driver and two guides who will assist them into the activities.*



# RECREATION FOR THE BLIND

By ANTOINETTE C. SEPTINELLI

IT should be emphasized at the outset that the Recreational Department of the Braille Institute is not a school, despite the fact that it is educational, in form. Furthermore, "social welfare" standards, regulations and background are not an integral part of it. Our blind friends can attend any and all of our projects, knowing that they are not "under observation" or inspection and that no attention is paid to their personal or private affairs. They are not questioned as to the type of home in which they live; about their incomes, their work, their diets, their families or their health. They are *not* given any psychological or other tests. There are no "entrance examinations", marks or certificates or diplomas — no "requirements" of any kind, except total or partial blindness.

The formal opening of the recreation project was held September 17, 1945. In the beginning approximately 250 blind persons were brought in by about 50 drivers, and 85 volunteer workers (sighted) were in attendance.

Mondays, from 10 a.m. to three p.m., meeting at the First Congregational Church, 535 South Hoover St., is our largest group, varying from 175 to 225. The evening meeting is held on Tuesdays at Exposition Recreation House, 3990 Menlo Avenue, from 7 to 10 p.m. The third group meets at Barnsdall Arts & Crafts Center, Vermont Avenue at Hollywood Boulevard, on Saturdays from 10 a.m. until noon.

On Mondays there are a discussion current event group, readers for individuals and groups in modern fiction, the classics, best sellers, college work and any other subject our blind friends wish; book reviews, a non-denominational Bible class, dramatics, short story and poetry writing, chorus singing, social dancing, longhand writing, braille, bridge lessons, conversational Spanish and French, cooking, sewing, knitting,

crocheting, rug-making, chenille flower making, raffia work, stencil painting, copper designing, and leather tooling.

On Tuesday evenings the program is repeated, insofar as the shorter period of time and the space permits. However, during the season, all of these activities which our blind friends desire on Tuesday evenings are given by alternating the subjects presented. Again, the Tuesday group have activities which are not presented on Mondays, due to a lack of time and space—an amateur radio class, corrective gymnastics and zoology.

Due to the fact that our facilities on Saturdays are particularly adaptable to arts and crafts, and also because of the size of the allotted space and the shortness of time, we present ceramic sculpturing only.

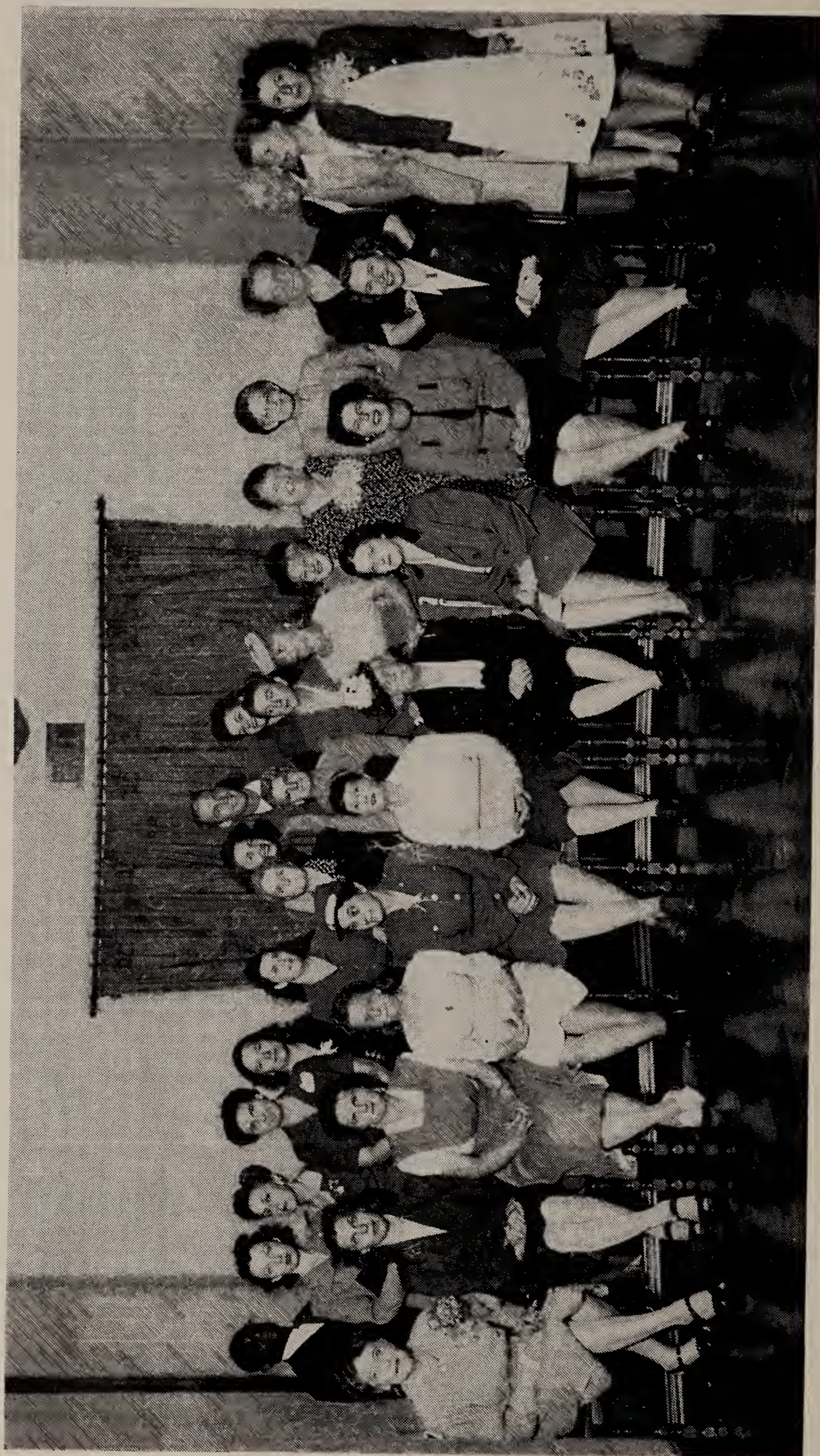
## Expert Instruction

The Braille Institute and particularly our blind friends who attend recreation are unusually fortunate because of the type of people who give of their time and ability each week to present each and every one of the activities. These people have had intensified education and training in the particular subjects they supervise and hold in their particular fields important positions in the business, professional and artistic world. To enumerate the leaders in each individual project would be impossible.

In dramatics we have had the cooperation of Madam Ouspenskaya, William A. Williams, head continuity writer for Mutual Broadcasting Company and James A. Garfield, a totally blind artist who has his own dramatic coaching studio and who as both a sighted and a blind man, has appeared on the best programs of stage and radio.

In short story and poetry writing we have had the support of J. Charles Davis, Associate Editor of "Field and Stream", Rebecca Porter, who for ten years taught in the University of Cali-





*A group of thirty out of eighty-five volunteer recreation workers*



fornia, Charles Carson, writer of "Death Valley Days" on the radio and the book, "Let's Write About You", Margaret Lee Runbeck, author of, "The Great Answer". Charles Maguire, President of the Professional Writer's League, and Franklin Llewellyn, magazine publisher and psychologist.

In social dancing the best instructors from the Arthur Murray School of Dancing have been in charge.

In chorus singing, Dr. Louise McAllister Tebbetts, former opera singer and accompanist for Madam Schumann-Heink, and Miss Nancy Wells, who trains voices for opera and radio, have generously given of their professional time and ability.

Sam Gordon, author of "Horse Sense Bridge", and Robert Lee Johnson, radio instructor in bridge on KMPC have worked with the bridge group.

### Cooking Specialists

Many specialists have guided the cooking classes, including Helen Bickford of the Southern California Gas Company, Dr. Grace Lawson of the Yami Yogurt Company and Brown Derby Restaurants, Jane Sterling of Helms Bakery, Norma Young of "Happy Homes" upon the radio, Martha Logan of Swift and Company and Prudence Penny of the Los Angeles Examiner.

Dr. Bruce Harrison, head of the Zoology Department of the University of Southern California, brings a skeleton on a platform, boxes containing the small bones of the body for each member of the group; specimens to explain the vital organs, and rubber gloves with soap and towels to clean up afterwards.

Dr. Eleanor Metheny, Director of the Physical Education Department of the University of Southern California, supervises corrective gymnastics.

The amateur radio group is supervised by a totally blind radio technician, Glyn Smith, assisted by many of the authorities in that particular field from

all the large radio studios. In this group the totally blind members are taught to make their own hand radios, during which they do soldering, learn the Morse Code and other information necessary to pass the examination for amateur radio licenses.

On Saturdays the ceramic sculpturing is demonstrated and guided by Marguerite Brunswig Staude, an artist who has exhibited in New York and Paris, and Lester Matthews, whose exhibitions have won acclaim in California.

### Handicraft Project

In the handicraft project we are doing what has never been done in the United States before — presenting to a larger group of totally blind people at the same time a greater variety of handicrafts. For instance, on Mondays we have 125 totally blind people who, grouped at different tables, are doing leather tooling, copper designing, stencil painting and the other handicraft already mentioned. This ambitious project is under the supervision of the heads of the AWVS (American Women's Voluntary Services) Workshop Directors of Southern California. These same women present handicraft at Sawtelle, the Van Nuys Veterans Hospital and the Naval Hospital at San Diego. They are ably assisted by handicraft experts from the Public School and Playground System, private schools and stores. The Monday handicraft is under the supervision of Miss Alma Wilson, for many years handicraft instructor and Assistant Superintendent of the Los Angeles Park and Playground System. The Tuesday handicraft is directed by Mrs. J. W. Scherer, chairman of the American Women's Voluntary Services workshops. On Mondays Mrs. Scherer also has charge of a group of forty-five women who do knitting and sewing. These totally blind women, ranging in age from 18 to 90, are making sweaters, socks, helmets, mittens, bed jackets and baby clothes which are sent by the AWVS to our former allies in Europe and to China. The State President of the American Women's Voluntary Services, Mrs.



Ryer Nickson, wrote us that the work done by our blind group is so accurate, neat and attractive that the inspectors do not have to re-do any of it as they sometimes have to, with work sent in by sighted groups. This is not because Mrs. Scherer or any of her assistants do or re-do the work of our blind friends, but because the blind, themselves want it to be good, regardless of whether it is done by a sighted or blind person. They do not want people to say, "Oh, how wonderful that is for a blind person." In order that their work be not judged by this standard, they realize that their "good" and "best" must be better than the good or best of a sighted person.

### Work Is Inspiring

When new volunteer workers generously offer their services they naturally ask if it is necessary to study the psychology of the visually handicapped or to read articles or books about the blind. We tell them that it is all right to do so if they wish and have the time, provided they read enough different material so that they do not have a biased, but broadened and varied viewpoint. Far more important and, in fact, the only thing they must do, is to forget that the individual or group are blind and present the activities as they would to their sighted groups. The intelligent questions, responses, reactions and suggestions of our blind friends will show them how to re-word or re-adjust their presentation if it is necessary. Our volunteer workers have always told me that they get far more than they give, not only in inspiration and satisfaction of service, but ideas which make presentation of their work to sighted groups easier and more efficient.

To demonstrate, before she started the corrective gymnastics with our group Dr. Eleanor Metheny wondered just how she would present it, for she relied so much on her sighted groups in the University understanding the correct way to take certain exercises through observing her demonstrations. (We told her that if she would present it in the

same way as she did in the University she would find that any changes needed would be automatically and tactfully suggested.) After the first few meetings Dr. Metheny reported that it had not been necessary to actually correct positions during exercises either by taking a hold of the persons doing them or by having them touch certain parts of her body to realize the position—as much as she had to do it with her sighted groups. The ability of the blind to concentrate acutely upon the meaning of verbal instructions, forming mental pictures, as it were, enables them to follow those instructions with remarkable accuracy.

### Leather Tooling

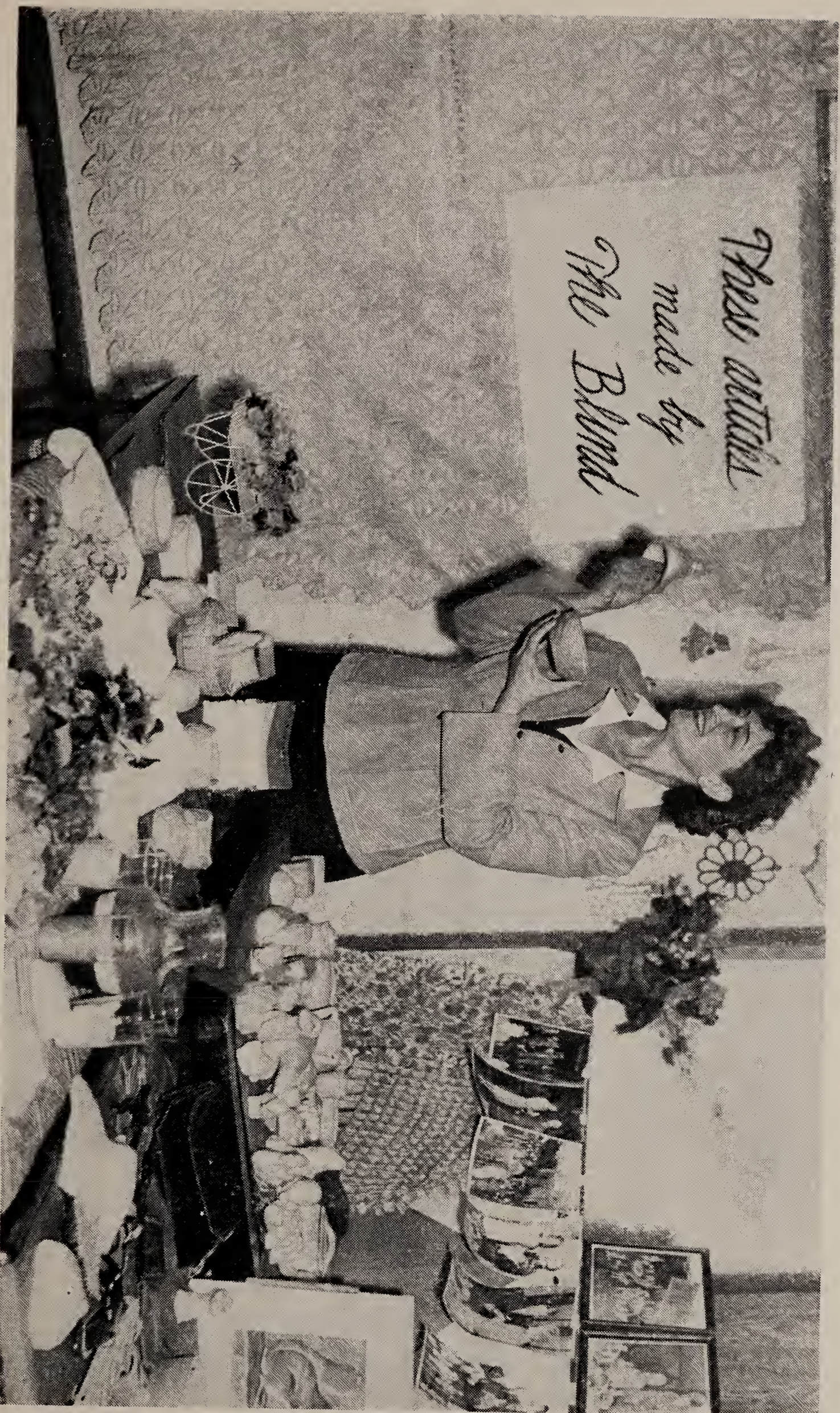
In leather handicraft, our friends tool key cases, coin purses, billfolds, large pocketbooks, book covers, moccasins and slippers. The leather is fastened to a board. Then a template made of metal is placed on the leather and attached to the board by means of adhesive tape. These templates have designs of flowers, animals and line variations. The blind people use plumb bobs and plastic hammers and pound the designs into the leather by working between the openings in the template. They then lace their articles together, using a difficult "double cordova" stitch.

In the same way designs are pounded into copper, using templates. Artistic and accurate pictures of people and scenes are made which when framed are as saleable as those in gift shops priced at \$27.00 and more.

Stencil painting is done in the same way on dresses, towels and luncheon cloths. Our blind friends know which colors to use, either by having them set out in a row and then memorizing their locations, by labeling the different colors in braille or by asking someone to hand them the various colors as they are ready for them. If they have never seen, so they do not have a mental conception from memory of colors, they form a mental picture of colors through using their imaginations after verbal



Exhibit at Gilmore Stadium of all types of handicraft made by the blind. Miss Luana Dohn, handicraft worker.





descriptions or by associating soft and brilliant colors by comparing them to music or voices of the same quality.

In the raffia work their acute, sensitive touch, their patience and their earnest desire to make their articles as nearly perfect as possible, cause the bottle and glass sets and other articles they wind to be even, smooth and close together without any rows being on top of others.

The templates, tools, paints, leather and other supplies for activities in our recreation department are donated by stores, factories, clubs or individuals, giving either the actual materials needed or money with which to purchase them.

We hope this account of the really worth while things being accomplished in handicraft will inspire those reading this article to cooperate with us on this project. It would make the work more interesting and worth while to our blind friends if we could have from twenty to twenty-five more workers in handicraft on Mondays between 10 a.m. and noon. This is not because the people taking it are slow or need special help but, on the contrary, because in most instances they are so accurate and quick that they finish the part of the work on which they are started before the worker can get back to start them on the next phase of it. If everyone could work to his full capacity without waiting for the next process it would mean a great deal if we could have one sighted supervisor to each two blind people.

### **Workers Trained**

Those wishing to cooperate would not have to be particularly skilled in handicraft or in any phase of it which we present. The only necessary thing is to like and to be able to work with one's hands. Each week a class is held to train the sighted workers. In this connection we also need several more volunteer workers to present longhand writing. One worker should not have to train more than two blind people at one time.

On Mondays our blind friends bring their own lunches and we serve coffee and milk. The lunch period is from 12 to 1. After all are seated at large tables, holding ten each, and before they start eating, they are given the inspiration and pleasure of worth-while programs. Prominent artists, of stage, screen and radio present programs of music, drama, comedy, quiz and other contests. (See page 22).

With all of these opportunities for presenting these activities, we still could not conduct this work if we did not have transportation for our blind friends. This part of the work, in some respects, is the most difficult part of our undertaking.

### **Transportation Problem**

There are 76 drivers, many of them driving over 100 miles a day to bring our blind friends to recreation and then take them home afterwards. They come from San Fernando, Pacoima, Van Nuys, Tujunga, North Hollywood, Hollywood, Alhambra, San Gabriel, El Monte, Monterey Park, Wilmar, Pasadena, Altadena, Compton, Bellflower, Lynwood, Artesia, San Pedro, Santa Monica, Venice, Culver City, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Glendale, Burbank and all over the Los Angeles area. Soon we will have groups from Long Beach and San Bernardino.

The American Women's Voluntary Services transportation unit, under the directorship of Mrs. Jeanette Reaume, made possible the starting of our recreation the first season and through all the season were our pioneer, hard-working and faithful drivers. They used both their station wagons and the private cars of all their drivers.

This season other groups also are cooperating in our transportation, because there are so many people coming and also a waiting list of 800 which makes it impossible for one organization to do it all. These include the American Red Cross, the American Legion Auxiliary, Lions Clubs, Native Daughters and many interested individuals.





*Floral Picture Stencil painted by A. E. Septinelli, blind painter. Mrs. Frances N. Brock, blind stencil painter. Mrs. J. W. Scherer, American Women's Voluntary Services Supervisor. Mrs. Lettie Pittinger, blind stencil painter.*





*Mrs. Ella Winchell, Blind Raffia Worker. Mr. Hervi Lubis, Blind Raffia Worker.*





*Miss Thelma Moen, Blind Ceramic Sculptor Worker. Mrs. Marguerite Brunwig Staude, Supervisor.*



The Braille Institute of America's insurance fully covers its legal responsibility in all of these activities in one of the soundest and most reliable of insurance carriers obtainable, the Travelers Insurance Company of Hartford, Conn.

With this understanding we are asking those who receive this article to telephone us at OLympia 1121 if they can drive either each Monday or one Monday a month.

### **New Building Need**

To meet the expanding needs of all departments, and because of the many more activities our blind friends want and should have, such as bowling, swimming, piano lessons, orchestra work, beauty culture, typing, dictaphone, first aid and home nursing and many other activities, the Braille Institute is planning a large new building.

As generous as our friends are who contribute space for recreation, we not only do not have enough separate rooms to present additional subjects, but we do not have the space to give all the people on the waiting list the activities we already have. Besides, we do not have space for the specialized equipment we should have for some of our activities nor do we have storage space for materials nor for the finished things made in our recreation department. In fact, we have to bring all of our handicraft materials in a truck from the Braille Institute each Monday morning and return it Monday afternoon. This makes it difficult for our workers to set it up properly. They have to spend a great deal of time at the close of the day repacking it carefully. Again, we do not have adequate space for the training of new workers or for the old workers to get together to work out new methods and plans.

In the new building it will be possible to serve a warm lunch to our blind friends, for there will be a large kitchen and a dining room where it can be served, and which will not have to be used for any other activity.

In the new building in the Jerome Kern Memorial Hall of Music with its well-equipped and lighted stage and proper acoustics, we can not only present our own dramatic and musical programs but have the right type of place for our guests to present programs to us—also for special meetings of all groups at the same time.

There will be a separate kitchen where the blind will actually be taught to cook as they would in their own homes. The beauty culture room will have special equipment and plenty of cupboard space. There will be separate rooms where those who do not enjoy group work can have individual braille or script lessons, piano lessons and any other individual work they desire. There will be a roof garden where our individuals and groups can be out in the sun to study, visit or have their club meetings. The handicraft room will have many cupboards and drawers for supplies, tools and finished products. The gymnasium will have horizontal bars, mats, and all types of equipment found in any well-equipped room of this type. Wrestling, modified games of ball and many types of sports enjoyed by the normally sighted can safely be presented here. There will be many large and well-equipped toilet facilities and rest rooms and also a fully equipped nurses first aid room.

### **Salesroom Needed**

Another reason we need the new building is because for lack of space, we cannot sell the articles made by the blind in handicraft, sewing, sculpturing and cooking classes. We haven't the staff necessary to do the salesmanship or bookkeeping. We cannot have that staff because we do not have the space for them to work or a room to be used as a craft shop sales room to display and sell the work of every blind person who has some articles he wishes to sell. Adequate sales space, accessible from the street, is provided in the new building plans.

If we arranged for the articles to be sold on the outside, not everyone's work





*James B. Garfield presents to Mrs. Antoinette C. Septinelli the first donation for the new building on behalf of the blind members of the Recreation Department at the Recreation's Christmas Party in December, 1945.*



could be presented for selling, as outside buyers would want to select only the unusual. Then, naturally, some people would be hurt, resentful and feel inferior. Then the spirit of our recreation—harmony and equal opportunity for all in a spirit of fun and relaxation—would be defeated.

### Vocational Training

It is impossible in our handicraft project or in any of our projects with our present space to agree definitely to train anyone so that he will be qualified to accept a position in outside industry, business or a profession. Again, it is lack of space for the equipment, supplies and number of supervisors necessary. More than this, if side by side or even at the same table or in the same room, some blind people are working just to enjoy what they are doing and perhaps to make gifts for their friends or their homes, and others are working to gain hand dexterity and speed in order to accept paying jobs, the project is no longer "recreation." First, because the training would have to be from a different approach and more intensified. We are too crowded to make this possible. Also, many in our handicraft groups, due to age and health conditions, could not and should not be working. To have people in their group taking the same handicraft supervision with a "work objective", would result in discouragement, "hurt feelings" and deprive those unable to earn a living of the sheer joy of just being able to make things. Therefore, we should be able to provide "vocational" training separately from pure recreation.

### Sponsored Units

The Braille Institute owns free of encumbrance, all of the frontage on North Vermont Avenue, from Monroe street, north to the intersection of Marathon street, a total of 475 feet, and all but 50 feet of this frontage will be utilized for the new building. A building fund campaign for \$600,000.00, by popular subscription, is under way. To enable individuals and organizations to

"sponsor" various portions of the building, all rooms have been "priced" in proportion to size and equipment and at this writing, the public has shown a keen and substantial interest in the sponsorship plan. The gymnasium has been sponsored at a cost of \$20,700.00; the bowling lanes at \$12,300.00; also numerous smaller units at costs ranging from \$550.00 "up". Sponsors will be identified by plaques and in some cases, the sponsored rooms will be designated as memorials. Any individual or organization interested in this plan may inquire, from the campaign headquarters, (OL 1121) and without obligation.

### Help for Veterans

Not only the recreation department, but all facilities of the Braille Institute are immediately offered to blinded veterans of World War II as soon as they come into our vicinity. We are very thankful that there are only about 2,500 blinded veterans of this war in the United States. This is 2,500 too many. Due to the type of ammunition used and the way it was used, if it came near enough to blind it generally killed. Our blinded veterans of this war receive \$190.00 to \$225.00 a month for life; may earn any amount besides and have all the benefits of the G. I. Bill of Rights. They should have all this and more. Yet we still have our 10,000 or more civilian blind in California, due to home and industrial accidents, diabetic conditions, cataracts and other illnesses. Approximately 80 per cent of these are 50 years of age or older. These men and women need understanding and co-operation. We must give them the new Braille Institute building to be the "Lighthouse" and Avon Training Center of the West. Here they can receive orientation—learn to walk alone with confidence, learn handicrafts, learn to read braille, learn to dance—learn, *in the spirit of recreation*, all the things the United States Government taught our blinded boys of this war at the Avon, Conn. Orientation Center. The *veterans* of this country who lost their physical sight in this war are happy and thankful





*Herbert Olson, Thelma Moen, Dr. Bruce Harrison (Supervisor), David Strelow and Blaine McDowell  
in Zoology Group.*



that through the experience and knowledge gained in bringing about their adjustment the way has been shown how to really aid the *civilian* blind.

Won't you who read this article come and visit our recreational groups, see for yourselves what is being done, talk with our blind friends and learn their viewpoints—see for yourselves our great need for this new building? Come and see our floor plans and either cooperate yourselves by sponsoring a unit, or tell your friends and organizations with which you are affiliated, who can cooperate with such projects about it, so that they, too, will come and judge for themselves the worthiness of our appeal.

In closing there are a few facts about our blind friends that I should like our sighted friends to know, because there are so many ideas told and written, based on a few persons or facts, or on hastily-formed conclusions.

### Blind Are "Individuals"

Most important of all, do not judge blind people as a group. They are individuals. If you happen to know a blind person who is despondent or irritable, do not come to the conclusion that all blind people are that way or that it is necessarily due to blindness anyway. It may be that it is a new blindness and even sighted people take time to adjust to the loss of a job or the loss of a friend. Again, it may be that the person has some other physical condition, which is the primary cause or at least a contributing cause of his attitude.

Besides this, thanks to science, far less than 1 per cent of blindness in the United States today is pre-natal or congenital and 90 per cent of it occurs after the age of forty years. By that time anyone's reactions to trouble, pleasures, himself and life are well formulated. Therefore, he is just keeping the same disposition and viewpoints he had when he saw. In fact, when he is once adjusted to being blind, he often is more agreeable and happier than he ever was before. This is true because we more read-

ily adjust to the inevitable, and when one has once been adjusted to something so important, the things that used to bother him, cease to disturb.

Blind people do not have a sixth sense or any other ability or sense that sighted people do not have. It is only that from necessity that they develop and use their other senses to a greater extent. They learn to read and see through their fingers. Hence their sense of touch becomes acute and a service to them in their homes, industries and professions. We could do the same if we did not, through habit, depend so much on our eyes. Again, they learn to develop their sense of hearing so that they hear more accurately, farther away, and learn to associate things with hearing that before they associated only by means of their eyesight. Naturally, unlike most sighted people they use their intuition, good judgment and inner powers of perception to the fullest extent. We could do the same, only habit makes us rely so much on the *outer* that we haven't any conception of the *inner* power that can give us both intelligent answers and the power to put these answers into practice. Then we all have facial vision, which is the power (when we do not use our eyes) of realizing that objects are in front of us by feeling their vibrations like a breeze on the skin of our faces. But this power has to be realized, developed and trained through actual practice, just as we have to develop the ability to swim, type or play the piano.

### Live Normal Lives

Our friends whom we so commonly call blind—but whom I like to speak of as "seeing otherwise than with their eyes"—are *average* men and women, like most of the people who see for the most part with only their eyes. Of course, there are people with special ability in various lines and there are other people who do not seem to have average mental ability, physical ability or hand dexterity. But this is also true of sighted people. The average blind person lives normally in his home and





*Sibyl Westbrook and Ray Penix, Blind Participants in Social Dancing Group.*



wherever he works, whether in industry, business or the professions and in his social life.

Any interested persons can verify the statements I have made, by visiting and seeing for himself, our recreation department. They will see our friends securing educational and cultural benefits, without any of the rules, restrictions or curricula of an "adult education" program. They may go to any

and all other activities and eventually, if they wish, come back to the first activity without feeling that they have been uncooperative or lacking in good judgment. Come and see this for yourself, that you may realize why we must have this new building, to make our recreation a permanent, living cooperation, on the large scale needed for the blind of Southern California. for all time to come.



## WHAT THEY TELL US . . .

THERE are over seven hundred blind people whose letters are on file who have told us that they wish to join the Braille Institute recreational activities, as soon as we have the space to accommodate them. Every one of them has heard statements like these, from friends attending:

"We bless the Braille Institute and the workers for taking us out of our rocking chairs and not only giving us pleasure but permitting us to live normal lives."

"I feel that I have not only lifted a burden of responsibility from my family, but they actually respect me because of the way I have learned to move about with confidence and cooperate in our home life because of the things I learned at recreation."

"Because of the hand dexterity and speed I gained during handicraft I was able to accept a position in industry where before I had not been qualified."

"Because of the many people I met at recreation who had it even more difficult than I, it was possible for me to overcome my resentment."

"The dancing groups made it possible for me to realize that I could go out not only to dances but to other social events of sighted groups and be normal like everyone there."

As a result we receive telephone calls regularly from many of them asking how our funds to start our new building are "coming on" and the constant question by phone calls, letters and personal contacts is, "Can't you possibly have your building by next year so that we may start coming?"



## *New Building to Benefit Blind of Los Angeles Area*

The following descriptive summary of the various units in the new Braille Institute building will illustrate the important place the recreation activities occupy in the Institute's blind welfare program:

On the first floor, the entire south half of the building will be occupied by the Jerome Kern Memorial Hall of Music, the two-lane bowling alleys, gymnasium (2422 sq. ft.) ; rooms for instruction in cooking, current events, longhand writing, bridge and other games and the office of the director of Recreation. There also will be a paved court, landscaped, which will serve many recreative purposes. The remaining half of the first floor will be occupied by administrative offices, Braille publishing plant, machine shop, main entrance lobby, the offices of the Social Welfare department, and a large salesroom for products made by the blind.

The second floor will contain a large game room, and the following recreation units: millinery instruction, short story and poetry, conversational modern languages, radio and electronics, beauty culture, handicraft, piano and vocal studios, sculpture and ceramics. In addition, there will be the accounting department, and a half-dozen more rooms for the Social Welfare department, such as Braille, typing and dictaphone instruction, etc. There also will be two large dressing rooms for the Jerome Kern Memorial auditorium, projection room, sound recording studios and a recreation roof-deck about 60 by 100 feet.

Thus, nearly two-thirds of the total floor space has been designated for the benefit of an estimated 2000 blind persons within the area of Metropolitan Los Angeles. Of this number, about 400 are attending the meetings now being held in outside locations, for a total of only about twelve hours a week—all that can be accommodated. And there is an actual waiting list of about 800—waiting for the day when they can enjoy the same privileges; the day when the new building is completed.



## RADIO STARS ENTERTAIN AT CHRISTMAS PARTY



*J. Robert Atkinson (center) Vice-president and Managing Director of the Braille Institute, congratulates Lum (right) and Abner of the famous radio team.*

More than 300 members of the Braille Institute Recreation groups attended a "continuous performance" Christmas party at the First Congregational Church on December 16, 1946, lasting from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with time off for lunch "between acts." They were entertained by several radio stars, including Jack Benny, Lum & Abner, Dennis Day, and "Chuck" Collins, blind pianist and entertainer of the American Broadcasting Company. Through the courtesy of Mrs. Elvira Marquis, there appeared from the El Patio Theatre,

Hollywood, Henry Brandon, reading selections from Shakespeare; William Maxwell, baritone and Ellen Shelley, pianist and accompanist.

A blind group directed by James B. Garfield gave an amusing skit before the microphone. Christmas carols were sung by the entire audience, under the direction of Dr. Louise McAllister Tebbetts and Mrs. Florence Herbert of the American Women's Voluntary Services.

Arrangements for the appearances of the radio stars were made by Barbara Craft, secretary of the Speakers Bureau.



## SUMMARY OF BRAILLE INSTITUTE SERVICES TO THE BLIND

**SOCIAL WELFARE**—Adjustment of personal problems created by blindness. Counseling service to the blind and partially sighted and their families.

**HOME TEACHING**—Lessons in self-reliance; free instruction in reading and writing Braille and Moon types; use of the typewriter; instruction in handicraft.

**BUSINESS PLACEMENT AND GUIDANCE**—Counseling with the employable blind; assisting them to find employment in professions and trades and enlarging their opportunities in the business world.

**RECREATION**—Planned activities, carried on in *outside*, “temporary” locations (until new building is ready) providing fun, fellowship and cultural opportunities for the blind. These include dramatics, music, book reviews, sewing, knitting, handicraft, short-story writing, social dancing, bridge class, electronics, pottery and sculpture. Recreation groups meet three times a week for a total of only 12 hours per week, with an average attendance of 400 a week—and with nearly 800 blind on a “waiting list” who cannot be accommodated until the new building is available. Transportation to recreation meetings provided by members of the American Women’s Voluntary Services and other volunteers.

**PRINTING DEPARTMENT**—Operates on a non-commercial basis for the publication of books and magazines in Braille and Moon types, sponsored by the Braille Institute, the Library of Congress and other agencies.

**LIBRARY**—Free circulation of books and magazines in Braille and Moon types and long-playing phonographic records, called “Talking Books,” to the blind in Southern California, Southern Nevada and Arizona.

**LITERATURE**—Sponsorship of books and magazines in Braille and Moon types on a non-profit basis, free to the blind unable to pay.

**BRAILLE BIBLES**—Publication of King James version of the Bible in Braille, free to the blind or at special prices below production cost.

**RESEARCH**—Operation of experimental machine shop and laboratory for the engineering and development of Braille typewriter, mechanical appliances and games helpful to the economic and social adjustment of the blind. A successful portable Braille Typewriter is now in production, after years of experiment.



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